

March 16, 1978

Dear Sylvia and Stan!

I received your letters of February 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> on the same day – March 5<sup>th</sup>. But I am only answering today.

First of all: congratulations on the birth of your first grandchild. Let little Laura grow up to be healthy, smart, beautiful, and lucky. And, of course, at the same time, let her Petrarch\* appear. I also wish for you to experience such joy and excitement several more times. Isn't it true that it would not be so bad to have two or three grandchildren?

Sylvia, I am very glad that you like my letters – this means you will answer them. Maybe this will not happen regularly, but I will not be offended. I understand that you have many other things to do and less free time than I have. You also work, and you have a larger family. Nevertheless, let us maintain our unexpected acquaintance. I really value it and I do not want it to be severed.

Victor and I laughed when we read the enthusiastic description of my handwriting in your letter. I find [my handwriting] to be repulsive. Here's the secret: when I write to you, I do not write, but rather I draw each letter so that it is easier for Bob to read. In one of his letters, he admitted to me that he does not know Russian well and so he runs to a teacher for help. Thus I am trying to write more legibly to at least make it easier for his work as a translator. It is easier for me in that sense because I have several acquaintances who are fully fluent in English. They

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\* This may be incorrect: it was hard to make this word out because Sara used a combination of Latin and Cyrillic letters.

read your letters for me with pleasure and not without interest, and I take notes. I also save them: the envelope containing your letter and the translation. (Looking at these notes is when you would be able to see my genuine handwriting.)

My dear Sylvia, unfortunately, no one, including you, can help me. “No” – is all. And as we say here, banging one’s head against the wall will not help. (Bob – understand? I try to write simply, without colloquialism, but I am afraid I am not always successful.)

I am sure that Lev did not receive Stan’s letter. First of all, his mother, with whom I correspond, would have let me know. Secondly, I have no doubt that he would have answered. Try again. Maybe the letter simply got lost?

I am writing from bed. I have been in bed for several days now. The doctor was here and said that I have a cold. I am a little better today; evidently I am on the mend. I am lying down and reading stories by old man Dickens. He is never passé. In my opinion, after more than 100 years, he is great.

How is Barbara feeling? Is she back at work? How is she coping with the little one? Here, as a rule, young mothers take a year of leave. They are paid for eight weeks before the birth and eight weeks after. For the remaining time they are on their own. That is, they do not get paid, but their jobs are kept for them for a year. How are things done in your country?

Yes, I always forget to ask. In our country a woman can quit work with 100% of her pension if she is 55 years old and she has 20 years of service. In your country?

Did Luba and Meyer return to N.Y.? If so, send regards. Send regards also to Leo and Dorothy. They were the first to have found me and I am very grateful to them.

Sylvia, please make a note in your letters of the date of the most recent letter you received from me. I am curious as to whether all the letters arrive.

How right you were – a thousand times over – when you wrote “do not put off for tomorrow what you can do today.” Or when the Germans say, “tomorrow, tomorrow, but not today, that is what the lazy ones say.” It would appear that you and I were in the lazy ones’ situation. It is really, really a pity, especially because this is already irreparable.

Bob, how is your work coming along? I am repeating myself, but I want to ask again: can I be of any use to you? Just write and I will, with great pleasure, do whatever is in my power. Forgive me for blabbering on – I will stop.

Regards from Victor. Kisses to you all.

Your Sara.